

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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SR-02 ORM-03 EB-11 DRC-01 /190 W

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R 211500Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6900

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY VJLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 11089

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJ: INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 9953

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF EMBASSY AIRGRAM
ON INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS BEING POUCHED TODAY. OUR
CONCLUSION IS THAT BANGLADESH WILL BE A MAJOR FOREIGN
POLICY PROBLEM FOR INDIA. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE POST-WAR EUPHORIA HAS PASSED, AND INDIA IS DIS-

COVERING THAT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH BANGLADESH IS NOT AN EASY ONE. FEW INDIAN OFFICIALS OR POLITICIANS HAVE FOCUSED ON THE LONGER-TERM PROBLEMS IN INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS, BUT THOSE WHO HAVE ARE NOT SANGUINE. ANTI-INDIAN FEELING IN BANGLADESH IS INCREASING IN SPITE OF INDIANS' REFUSAL TO ABANDON BANGLADESH DURING INDIA-PAKISTAN NEGOTIATIONS, ITS GENEROUS AID, AND ITS EFFORTS TO PREVENT OR POSTPONE BILATERAL PROBLEMS. INDIA SEES BANGLADESH TREATING IT LIKE A FOREIGN COUNTRY, ALBEIT A FRIENDLY ONE. INDIAN LEADERS CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW A BANGLADESH FOR WHICH THEY HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH CAN NOW BE UNGRATEFUL. INDIAN INSTINCT IS TO LOOK FOR FOREIGN DEVILS, THE MOST LIKELY BEING PAKISTAN, CHINA AND THE US. THIS IS EASIER THAN ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF FRICTION WITH BANGLADESH.

2. SOME ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL ISSUES: SMUGGLING IS THE MOST VISIBLE IRRITANT -- INDIAN GOODS FLOW INTO BANGLADESH WHERE SHORTAGES PERMIT THEM TO BE SOLD AT EXORBITANT PRICES, AND BANGLADESH PRODUCTS, SUCH AS JUTE AND EVEN RICE, ARE SMUGGLED TO INDIA. OFFICIAL TRADE ISN'T GOING WELL. INDIA FEELS IT CAN'T AFFORD TO PROVIDE MUCH MORE AID OR TO PROVIDE IT FOREVER, EVEN THOUGH BANGLADESH STILL HAS LARGE UNMET NEEDS. THE TWO COUNTRIES MUST AGREE BEFORE INDIA BEGINS DIVERSION OF THE GANGES TO FLUSH OUT CALCUTTA PORT. MEDIA EXCHANGES AND TRAVEL ARE RESTRICTED. HINDU REFUGEES FROM EAST PAKISTAN BEFORE 1971 WERE NEVER PAID FOR PROPERTY LEFT BEHIND.

3. ALL OF THESE AND OTHER PROBLEMS ARE LIKELY TO LOOM LARGER AS INDIA-PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH RELATIONS ARE SORTED OUT AND CONFLICTS ARISE BETWEEN INDIA'S INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF ITS OWN BORDERING BANGLADESH AND ITS INTEREST IN GOOD RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH. BENGALEE RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND CHINA WILL INEVITABLY PLACE SOME STRAIN ON INDIA-BANGLADESH TIES, EVEN IF INDIAN RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND CHINA ALSO IMPROVE. INDIA AND BANGLADESH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY TRY TO KEEP DIFFERENCES FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND, BUT THE IRRITANTS WILL REMAIN AND PROBABLY GROW.

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4. WHAT WOULD INDIA DO IF THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION DETERIORATED TO THE POINT THAT MUJIB ASKED FOR HELP OR MUJIB'S POSITION WAS THREATENED BY A GROUP WHICH APPEARED ANTI-INDIAN EVEN IF NOT PRO-CHINESE? FACTORS BEARING ON INDIA'S DECISION WOULD INCLUDE: CLOSE INDIAN TIES TO MUJIB; POSSIBLE SUPPORT FROM A HOSTILE OR UNSTABLE BANGLADESH FOR CHINESE PRESSURE ON THE INDIAN NORTHEAST

AND FOR DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS WITHIN INDIA, SUCH AS THE MAOIST
NAXALITIES IN WEST BENGAL; IMPACT ON COMMUNAL TIES
WITHIN INDIA OF PERSECUTION OF THE HINDUS IN BANGLA-
DESH; BENGALIEE SENSITIVITY TO INDIAN INVOLVEMENT;
AND, FINALLY. THE
NEGATIVE IMPACT INDIAN INTERVENTION WOULD
HAVE ON ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. WE BELIEVE INDIA WOULD TRY
TO AVOID MILITARY INVOLVEMENT BUT MIGHT ACT AT MUJIB'S
REQUEST -- OR AT THE REQUEST OF OTHER PRO-INDIAN ELEMENTS --
TO HELP RESTORE LAW AND ORDER IN A GEOGRAPHICALLY
LIMITED AREA. BEYOND THIS INDIA WOULD TRY TO KEEP ITS
INVOLVEMENT RESTRICTED TO MATERIAL FOR RELIABLE MILITARY
OR PARA-MILITARY UNITS.
SCHNEIDER

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